

## THE NEIGHBORHOOD FUND

Celebrating 20 Years of Changing Communities

# 1991-2011



The Community Foundation  
FOR GREATER ATLANTA

*The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta connects people to the issues and organizations making a difference in our region. We provide personalized, philanthropic advice to individuals and families interested in making a long-term impact with their giving, and we provide community leadership on critical issues in our region. Together with our donors, partners, volunteers and community leaders, we are improving communities in our 23-county region through philanthropy.*

# *Celebrating 20 years of empowering local leaders to positively impact their neighborhoods*

Since 1991, the Neighborhood Fund, an initiative of The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, has supported local residents and community groups helping them build upon their strengths to improve their neighborhoods. At The Community Foundation, we believe improving community begins with the passion and leadership of the residents who live in that community. For two decades, we have helped residents transform their ideas and energy into results. While our approach has changed over the years, we have remained focused on strengthening local communities by supporting the very people who call that place home.

This brochure features the people who have helped make the Neighborhood Fund a success and the stories of how their ideas, energy, passion and leadership have helped improve their communities.

# The Neighborhood Fund

The Neighborhood Fund provides small grants and community coaching to help residents build upon their strengths and assets. This approach is based on the work of the Asset-Based Community Development Institute of Northwestern University and differs from traditional approaches to community development that look at a community's "needs and deficits" and seeks to provide services to meet those needs. By focusing on the positive qualities of neighborhoods, the Neighborhood Fund helps to build communities through trusting, listening and empowering the residents who call that place home.

Neighborhood Fund grants are diverse, flexible and highly competitive. Projects and activities are limited only by the imagination and energy of a neighborhood's residents and can include one-time events such as cultural fairs, block parties and beautification projects, as well as long-term undertakings such as after school programs or community organizing efforts. On average, grants will range between \$3,000 and \$5,000. Neighborhood Fund grantees also receive the support and assistance of an assigned community coach who works with the group during the duration of the grant.

In addition to funding support, a key offering of the Neighborhood Fund is leadership development. From 2001 to 2009, the Neighborhood Fund operated its Leadership Institute to help increase citizens' capacity to work effectively in their communities. Each year, the program graduated 20 to 25 residents from across the region. In 2009, The Community Foundation transitioned from implementing the Leadership Institute to a more comprehensive role of creating efficiencies

and providing support to the region's existing grassroots leadership programs.

## WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

Through our involvement with the Neighborhood Fund, we have learned how to better utilize the assets in our community – be it donors, volunteers, nonprofits or community groups – by providing them with the support to make the best decisions for themselves. We have learned to listen and trust others, and this has transformed our overall approach to problem solving and community improvement.

Through the Neighborhood Fund, we have seen that guidance and support to individual leaders at the grassroots level can help them make significant contributions and bring about lasting, positive change in their communities. We know that successful grantmaking requires a major investment of time, talent and energy from community coaches to advisory committee members to Foundation staff. Having these dedicated human resources has been integral to the success and growth of the Neighborhood Fund.

Community building is a community-wide effort. Partnerships have been an asset to the Neighborhood Fund and provided us the resources, community connections and diversity of thought to develop and sustain the initiative. These collaborations have increased the impact of neighborhood improvement efforts by concentrating energy, insight and ideas that result in the "whole is greater than the parts" manner.







# Approach



## IMPACT

Since 1991, the Neighborhood Fund has provided \$2.7 million in grants and support to communities across The Community Foundation's 23-county region. Grants and support have helped fund a wide range of improvements that have beautified neighborhoods, increased safety and health, supported education and youth development, celebrated culture, fostered community identity and enhanced overall quality of life in local neighborhoods. Along with these tangible improvements, the Neighborhood Fund leaves a legacy of increased local capacity to achieve positive change.

Grants Allocated .....665

Counties in which Grants  
Have Been Made .....17

Total of Monetary Awards .....\$2.7 million

Number of Residents  
Receiving Leadership Training .....225

(May 1991-May 2011)

## KEY COMPONENTS

For the past 20 years, the Neighborhood Fund has successfully strengthened metro Atlanta neighborhoods. There are multiple organizations and individuals that have helped make this work possible. These groups include donors, community partners, community coaches, Neighborhood Fund advisory committee members and local residents. Each plays a unique role in helping the Neighborhood Fund accomplish its goals. As we celebrate 20 years of grassroots grantmaking, we highlight these individuals and the stories of their ideas, energy, passion and leadership.

**Donors** – Several donors of The Community Foundation have made the Neighborhood Fund a priority, including a substantial contribution in 1994 to start an endowment for the initiative. Donors do not make grants directly to non-501(c)(3) groups but instead to the Neighborhood Fund, which allows them to support grassroots activities and community development at the local level. Donors whose interests coincide with Neighborhood Fund activities are proactively informed and encouraged to provide support.

**Community Partners** – Partnering with various public and private entities has allowed the Neighborhood Fund to access additional resources, connections and overall, have a greater impact in communities throughout our region. Each partnership is unique in its design, duration and targeted community members. Partnerships have included collaborations with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Atlanta Falcons Youth Foundation and the City of Atlanta.

**Community Coaches** – These individuals work directly with Neighborhood Fund grant recipients to provide training and expertise throughout the life of the grant. Community coaches are the critical link between The Community Foundation and grantees. As paid consultants, they work on multiple levels to perform functions including meeting facilitation, volunteer management, group decision making, leadership development and coalition building.

**Advisory Committee Members** – Talented, devoted volunteers throughout the region comprise the Neighborhood Fund advisory committee. Members provide oversight of programs and review recommendations from staff, conduct site visits and provide leadership on relevant neighborhood issues. These individuals are drawn from throughout the region and represent a range of perspectives including neighborhood, for-profit, nonprofit, faith-based, policymaking and philanthropy.

**Local Residents** – Committed, concerned residents are the driving force for sustained, community change. The Neighborhood Fund aims to support these residents to be change agents who apply learnings from the Neighborhood Fund to strengthen their communities. With coaching and support, community groups have been able to develop strategic, high-impact projects to increase quality of life in their communities.

# Winsome Hawkins

After joining The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta in 1989, Winsome Hawkins became an instrumental force in the founding and growth of the Neighborhood Fund. After four years of initial funding from the Mott Foundation, The Community Foundation, with support from its donors and board of directors, secured additional funding to keep the initiative going.

“You will hear people say that people in poor neighborhoods are apathetic and they don’t do anything. I knew that was not so, so my challenge was to prove that myth wrong,” says Hawkins who was the senior program officer when the Neighborhood Fund was created. “If you get to know the neighborhoods and the people living in those neighborhoods, there will always be leaders that can make things happen.”

One of the first steps in the development of the Neighborhood Fund was creating an advisory committee comprised of individuals from various sectors of the community. This group established the Neighborhood Fund application guidelines, funding criteria and began going on site visits to metro Atlanta communities to see what the needs were. “What we saw was that the needs varied,” Hawkins says.

One of the Neighborhood Fund’s earliest grantees was a small, two-block neighborhood requesting trashcans for its streets to prevent people from littering. Other projects included residents wanting to clean up a polluted community creek and another group wanting to fix up the homes of elderly residents. Another memorable project for Hawkins was a community garden where the abundance of produce grown resulted in donations to the Atlanta Community Food Bank.

“People, no matter their financial situation, were willing to give back something. They wanted to give back to the Food Bank as a way to repay what had been given to them,” Hawkins says. “The projects

done by all the community groups were very different. But what they had in common was this – they all brought residents together and helped them take ownership for the place where they lived, and gave them the resources to really make a difference.”

It is the positive ripple effect of the Neighborhood Fund grants that Hawkins sees as one of its biggest successes. Neighborhood Fund programs like the Neighborhood Fund Leadership Institute also bolstered the spread of community change. “The Institute recognized the leadership that people were providing in their neighborhoods and gave them additional skills so they could become even stronger leaders,” she says.

The Leadership Institute started as a pool of 10 applicants the first year and surged to nearly 30 by the time Hawkins left The Community Foundation in 2002 as its vice president for programs and community initiatives. Looking back, Hawkins is proud that the initiative she helped build is celebrating its 20th anniversary. Despite her hard work in the initiative’s beginning years, Hawkins credits much of the Neighborhood Fund’s success to The Community Foundation’s leadership.

“I give a lot of credit to Alicia Philipp, president of The Community Foundation, who saw the value of the Neighborhood Fund to the metro Atlanta community from the very beginning. I could not have asked for a more supportive president in terms of making this happen and recognizing the value of continuing it for the past two decades,” she says.



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*Winsome Hawkins, Vice President of Programs and Community Initiatives, 1989-2002  
The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta*



# Ann Chakales

Ann Chakales, community relations manager at Equifax, was a member of the Neighborhood Fund advisory committee for more than two decades. Joining the committee in 1991 at the urging of a business colleague, Chakales has seen the initiative grow from its early stages of development.

“I really believe in the mission of the Neighborhood Fund. There is so much these neighborhood groups can do to improve their communities but there unfortunately are not many options for funding for these groups outside the Neighborhood Fund,” she says.

Initially known as the Neighborhood Small Grants Program, the Neighborhood Fund transitioned into a sustained program in 1994, becoming a permanent fixture for The Community Foundation to engage with the grassroots leaders of metro Atlanta. The number of applicants grew as did the geographic footprint of the communities benefiting from grants and coaching.

“When I first became involved, it was pretty much the City of Atlanta, Fulton County, DeKalb County and a much smaller geographic area. Over the years the Neighborhood Fund expanded into other counties and diverse communities throughout metro Atlanta,” Chakales recalls.

From Cobb and Gwinnett to Henry and Clayton counties, the Neighborhood Fund’s reach became widespread with grassroots organizations and community leaders across the region working to make a difference in their community. Many of these positive changes came through physical improvements such as community gardens or street signage, as well as less tangible improvements like increased community engagement through education and leadership training. Throughout her service on the advisory committee, Chakales says she was most impressed with the drive and passion of these small organizations.

“All the neighborhood groups that come to the Neighborhood Fund for funding are such great

grassroots organizations. They are the groups and the people who are really going to make something happen in their neighborhoods,” she says.

One highlight of Chakales’ time as an advisory committee member was attending site visits to various communities to see the Neighborhood Fund in action. She saw that many times, what started out as a small project grew into something more substantial. “This one organization developed a cleanup project at a local creek, which expanded into an educational program teaching youth about conservation and the importance of keeping their neighborhood clean. Many times we see these initial ideas morph into something greater than the group first imagined,” she says.

During her tenure on the advisory committee, Chakales saw first-hand how Neighborhood Fund grants and community coaching had a positive impact on communities throughout the region. She says the Neighborhood Fund is unique because of its ability to help small neighborhood groups and organizations, many that are not registered 501(c)(3) organizations, receive financial assistance not typically available from corporations or private foundations. Although the financial benefit of receiving a grant is helpful to these groups, Chakales says the technical assistance offered by community coaches proves to be the vital component needed to ensure the success of a project.

“This coaching really strengthens the group and the whole community,” she says. “It’s a really good component of the initiative enabling neighborhood groups to develop projects to improve their community, and to learn and grow as an organization so they can continue to keep their communities healthy and strong.”





*Ann Chakales, Advisory Committee Member  
1991-2009  
Equifax Community Relations Manager*



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# Paul Hallock

When Paul Hallock was a young boy, he remembers he and his father, the late Roger Hallock, spending time at a Boys & Girls Club in downtown Atlanta and arranging for youth from the club to spend weekends at their home. Paul recalls trips to the lake with the boys and other opportunities many had never before experienced.

“The experience certainly made an impression on me. My father provided well for our family and I had a wonderful childhood. At even a young age, it helped me to see the importance of giving to others and that not everyone has the same experiences growing up,” Paul says.

This was just one of the ways Roger Hallock, a successful Atlanta businessman, gave back to the community. Hallock became involved with The Community Foundation in the 1980s and served on the Neighborhood Fund’s advisory committee, taking a keen interest in improving neighborhoods in downtown Atlanta.

“Dad chose early on to give back and he decided to focus on Atlanta because it had been good to him in the business world. I think he felt it was the right place to give back,” Paul says.

Along with providing guidance as a committee member, Roger gave generously to support the Neighborhood Fund over the years. In 1986 he set up an endowment for the initiative, which continues each year to supplement The Community Foundation’s grantmaking dollars to the Neighborhood Fund.

“One of the legacies that he left was setting up a trust that would provide money specifically for the Neighborhood Fund. That was an indication of how near and dear it was to his heart,” Paul says.

A generous man, Roger enjoyed giving others the knowledge, resources and support to help them become self-sufficient.

“You know the old saying, ‘Give a man a fish and feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.’ I think Dad’s feeling was he wanted to be involved, but not to do something just temporarily,” Paul says. “He wanted to find ways to help people who were willing to help themselves.”

The Neighborhood Fund proved to be the perfect vehicle for Roger to accomplish this goal. Through his involvement, he was able to bring resources to address needs that would continue to improve neighborhoods in downtown Atlanta for many years to come. With a deep passion for community development, Roger also served on the Reynoldstown Revitalization Corporation board (now Resources for Residents and Communities) in the 1990s and his philanthropic support extended to grantees like the South River Garden Association. Today, there is a bench in South River Garden placed in his memory following his passing in 2005.

“He had always taken an interest in helping out in Atlanta, particularly in the downtown area, so it didn’t surprise me that when he retired from his career he decided to get involved with The Community Foundation,” Paul says. “He not only gave financial resources, but he also gave of his time and tried to help and improve the city of Atlanta and the lives of its residents.”



*Paul Hallock, son of late donor Roger Hallock, Neighborhood Fund donor, and his mother Mrs. B.J. Hallock*



*“Dad chose early on to give back and he decided to focus on Atlanta because it had been good to him in the business world. I think he felt it was the right place to give back.”*





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Cashawn Myers, 2008 and 2010 Grantee  
Executive Director, HABESHA Inc.



# Cashawn Myers

While attending Clark Atlanta University, Cashawn Myers was inspired by a professor's comments regarding the lack of positive opportunities for youth living in public housing near the university's campus. He took those words with him and in 2002 founded HABESHA Inc., an environmentally-conscious organization that works to cultivate leadership in youth through cultural education, sustainable agriculture, entrepreneurship, holistic health and technology. Starting out as a small grassroots organization located in Atlanta's Mechanicsville community, HABESHA has grown to be a successful nonprofit with an affiliate branch in Baltimore as well as the Atlanta-based HABESHA Gardens Complex. Myers credits much of the organization's success to the Neighborhood Fund, which provided HABESHA with two separate grants in 2008 and 2010.

"The Community Foundation has really made a difference in our organization. We've grown leaps and bounds in the past three years," Myers says. "Our organization is more structured, our programs are more effective and we are better able to leverage funds," he says.

HABESHA's first grant from the Neighborhood Fund came in early 2008 in support of its Sustainable Seeds program, which is focused on the development of an urban organic garden as well as a cultural, science and math enrichment program for students at Dunbar Elementary School. Although funding was needed to help the program thrive, the community coaching assistance that came with the grant was just as valuable, Myers says.

"Our particular community coach, Erika Williams, was really helpful and supportive and went above and beyond what was required of her," Myers says. "In addition to providing support for the program she also really helped us think how to build our infrastructure as an organization."

Williams helped HABESHA take advantage of free training resources and stayed in touch with Myers even after the grant ended. It was because of this relationship that Williams became HABESHA's coach once again when the organization received a second Neighborhood Fund grant in 2010, this time focused on board development.

"Having Erika as our community coach was a two-fold benefit because we had someone we already knew and someone who already knew our organization," Myers says.

During the second grant process, Williams organized a strategic planning retreat for HABESHA in the North Georgia Mountains from which a detailed report was created that the organization uses in its operations today.

"The report has helped us on so many levels to grow our organization and gain the structure that we needed," Myers says.

Already in the process of recruiting board members, HABESHA recently underwent its first financial audit. Myers credits much of the organization's success in the past two years – which includes securing nearly \$150,000 in financial support from various sources – to the assistance supplied by the Neighborhood Fund.

"Our overall structure has tremendously improved. I feel like we are a lot more efficient, and a lot more effective in our programming and planning as an organization," Myers says. "We are in the position now to go after larger sums of money to support our organization even more. I can say that it is really a result of the support from The Community Foundation and specifically the Neighborhood Fund."



“*The Neighborhood Fund played an important role in the development of our initiative and in reaching beyond established nonprofits in the community to identify community-based leaders who could be helpful.*”

*John Bare, Vice President for Sports Philanthropy and Affiliated Funds  
The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation*

# John Bare

When the Atlanta Falcon Foundation, an affiliated fund of The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation, was preparing to launch its childhood obesity initiative in 2005, it sought help from the Neighborhood Fund to identify community leaders that could help make a difference in the lives of youth. From 2005 to 2007 the Neighborhood Fund did just that, reaching out to those in need of technical assistance and providing grant support to help kids be more physically active.

“We made a grant to the Neighborhood Fund, providing the guidelines for what we were looking for. They then did the due diligence and developed applications for individuals seeking technical assistance and for organizations looking for small grants,” says John Bare, vice president for Sports Philanthropy and Affiliated funds for The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation.

Although The Blank Foundation had strong relationships with large nonprofit organizations, it needed the Neighborhood Fund’s help connecting with smaller, grassroots organizations whose members could play a significant role in fighting childhood obesity. One of these neighborhood leaders included the owner of a local barbershop who was interested in getting involved with youth programs. Over the course of the initiative, The Blank Foundation saw passionate individuals like this resident develop into strong leaders who continue to work with the foundation today.

“The Neighborhood Fund played an important role in the development of our initiative and in reaching beyond established nonprofits in the community to identify community-based leaders who could be helpful,” Bare says.

Throughout the partnership with the Neighborhood Fund, The Blank Foundation accomplished a series of important victories in its fight against childhood obesity. One of the lessons learned was the importance of having activities for children during times like spring break when free time can translate into unhealthy behaviors.

“Even though that one week may have seemed like a pretty small need, we might have overlooked it. The Neighborhood Fund helped us identify how important this time period was in the neighborhood,” Bare says.

The Neighborhood Fund’s ability to reach past formal, established nonprofit organizations and deal directly with individuals and communities makes it a very necessary program, according to Bare. Without resources like the Neighborhood Fund, many of these smaller groups would be overlooked.

“If you don’t have this kind of mechanism, neighborhood groups not formally incorporated as nonprofits don’t have a role. But they need a role, and they can help produce big results,” he says. “The big value is being able to reach beyond some of the more obvious institutional partners to individuals and informal associations that can move the needle on issues.”

Along with its direct connection to smaller organizations, Bare says the Neighborhood Fund’s speed and flexibility to respond to issues that arise also makes it unique.

“Foundations, just by their design, tend to have a relatively slow grant processes,” he says. “Many times, needs come up in the neighborhood that are unpredictable and merit quick response or the opportunity is lost. The Community Foundation can play a role in addressing the need through the Neighborhood Fund by being more flexible in that way.”

# Robin Meyer

The Mableton Improvement Coalition (MIC) was formed in 2001 by a group of concerned citizens who wanted to voice their concerns on zoning issues in their South Cobb County community. In 2007, the organization received its first grant from the Neighborhood Fund to convene neighbors around greenspace. The partnership with the Neighborhood Fund grew as MIC narrowed its focus, received additional support to develop a greenspace plan, as well as preserve historic properties in the Chattahoochee River Line Historic Area.

“I can honestly say we could not have accomplished all that we have without the Neighborhood Fund,” says Robin Meyer, chair of the MIC.

In 2009, the Neighborhood Fund awarded the MIC a second grant for \$10,000 to create a master plan for the Chattahoochee River Line Historic Area. With these funds, the group partnered with a well-known consulting firm to assist with mapping, planning and strategizing the best way to preserve sites along the river. The firm, which is locally-based, also provided additional in-kind support. Following the development of the master plan, Cobb County took notice and dedicated an additional \$100,000 of county resources to create a more detailed master plan for improvements along the river line.

“We were able to leverage the Neighborhood Fund dollars 10 to one to develop an even more detailed plan to actually bring about some of the things we were thinking about,” Meyer says.

The MIC also received a \$25,000 unsolicited grant from a private foundation and a \$45,000 preservation federal grant as a result of its contact with the Neighborhood Fund. The group is using the money to help fund a feasibility study of a historic house, explore cemetery preservation and also hire a fundraising consultant to help the organization take its work to the next level.

Along with the grant money that came as a result of the partnership with the Neighborhood Fund, the technical assistance provided by the MIC’s community coach, Larry Silver, helped strengthen the group’s mission and its ability to accomplish it.

“Not only is he knowledgeable about how these things are done, but he also has very good personal insight,” Meyer says. “Having his expert third-party view on things just made it happen.”

Although the improvement project to the river line is still in the planning stages, Meyer says the help provided by the Neighborhood Fund has been critical in building the MIC’s expertise and helping shape their goals. Today the Mableton Improvement Coalition continues to broaden its relationship within the community.

“I think the single biggest attribute of the Neighborhood Fund is that you are not required to be a 501(c)(3),” Meyer says. “They are willing to work with folks who have just come together around a good idea and are willing to take a chance on them, being flexible and thoughtful and always there with support and guidance.”





“They are willing [the Neighborhood Fund] to work with folks who have just come together around a good idea and are willing to take a chance on them, being flexible and thoughtful and always there with support and guidance.”

Robin Meyer, 2007 and 2009 Grantee  
Mableton Improvement Coalition

# Karen Rogers

Karen Rogers, director of the City of Atlanta's Weed and Seed program, has seen great change in local communities as a result of the program's relationship with the Neighborhood Fund. Weed and Seed is a neighborhood restoration and transformation initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Justice that brings people together to prevent and control crime by focusing in the areas of law enforcement, crime prevention and neighborhood revitalization. In 2007, Weed and Seed began working with the Neighborhood Fund Leadership Institute to help residents gain valuable leadership training and experience.

"We believe that building a community's capacity in the area of local leadership is an important role, so the Neighborhood Fund Leadership Institute was a great match for us," Rogers says.

The Neighborhood Fund operated its Leadership Institute from 2001 to 2009, offering local leaders capacity-building training and knowledge to help them continue to strengthen their communities. Weed and Seed communities benefited from the Institute by helping local residents develop specific improvement projects for their neighborhoods. Along with the training component, Weed and Seed communities also took advantage of the financial resources available through Neighborhood Fund grants.

"It's been great seeing people prepared through training, come up with cool ideas and then submit them to the Neighborhood Fund for support. The community coaches continue the work and the cycle continues," Rogers says.

Since 2007 Rogers has seen residents grow from wanting to be leaders – but not knowing how – to being the chairs of committees and becoming active in a variety of community activities.

"That confidence brought about achievements in their personal lives as well," she says. "We had one person who wanted to be a chair but didn't know even the basics of facilitating a meeting such as creating an agenda. So during one of the training sessions they taught about leadership skills, which helped strengthen that person's natural talent and abilities. And eventually she did become chair."

One of Rogers' most memorable projects, which continues to thrive today, is the English Avenue Broken Window project. This effort aims to improve the English Avenue community near downtown Atlanta by clearing plant overgrowth and debris from areas surrounding abandoned buildings, as well as empower residents to report code violations and crime. This initiative led to significant improvements to the neighborhood's roadways and public safety.

"The group that developed this project began with leadership coaching and support from the Neighborhood Fund. That training started it all and was the entry point that eventually brought all this about," Rogers says. "This is the only program I know that can take the energy and ideas of people, help them organize around their shared goal, and provide support to them, both financially and through coaching. I don't know anyone else doing this unique type of work."

*Karen Rogers, Director, City of Atlanta  
Weed and Seed*



*“It’s been great seeing people prepared through training, come up with cool ideas and then submit them to the Neighborhood Fund for support. The community coaches continue the work and the cycle continues.”*





“If we had not had the money to include a program focusing on hands-on education for youth, the community gardens would not have been as successful as they’ve been – and that makes a huge difference to the whole community.”

Jewell Hatcher, 2010 Advisory Committee Member and 2009 Grantee  
Founder, Harvest of the Heart Garden



# Jewell Hatcher

After seeing a flier on a food distribution program based on produce grown by farmers, Jewell Hatcher decided to start a similar organization to provide food to the hungry – but on an even larger scale.

Hatcher's founding of Harvest of the Heart Garden Inc., in February 2006, was also influenced by her struggles in childhood. After her father became disabled and her mother became his caregiver, her family had a difficult time making ends meet.

"I'm a very compassionate, heartfelt person. I know how it feels to be without things that many people take for granted," Hatcher says. "I feel the need to share and work for other people that have problems to help make their lives easier."

Harvest of the Heart Garden is an organization that maintains and distributes free, local, organically-farmed produce to the disabled, financially stressed and elderly in Morgan County. Growing the organization from inception, Hatcher has seen it provide free food to an increasing number of individuals, many of whom have returned to serve as volunteers.

"One of our recipients, a family of five, really came full circle. They started out as our first recipient family and ended up becoming hardworking, full-time volunteers working 52 weeks a year," Hatcher says.

In 2009, as Hatcher looked to expand Harvest of the Heart Garden, she reached out to the Neighborhood Fund in what became a turning point for the organization. With support from the Neighborhood Fund, Harvest of the Heart Garden grew from neighborhood farmers providing one row of their harvest to neighbors in need, to a full-scale, year-round community farming program. Through coaching assistance, the all-volunteer organization increased its manpower and expanded programming to also focus on educating at-risk youth. These efforts culminated in the development of week-long camps for a local Boys & Girls Club.

Following the partnership with the Neighborhood Fund, Harvest of the Heart Garden's recipient numbers tripled, growing to 8,000 individuals, and the organization learned how to develop successful fundraising efforts to aid further expansion. The number of community gardens also grew from two to five – some gardens spanning nearly three acres.

"These positive outcomes were made possible as a direct result of being awarded a Neighborhood Fund grant from The Community Foundation," Hatcher says.

Hatcher credits the Neighborhood Fund's community coaching with giving her and her program volunteers the courage to be more aggressive in fundraising, a key component to achieving their mission. She says the organization's ability to also focus on youth is allowing Harvest of the Heart Garden to make an even greater impact in the community.

"If we had not had the money to include a program focusing on hands-on education for youth, the community gardens would not have been as successful as they've been – and that makes a huge difference to the whole community," Hatcher says.

Following her involvement as a 2009 grantee, Hatcher was asked to serve on the Neighborhood Fund advisory committee – what she considers to be one of the biggest honors of her life. Through collaboration with fellow committee members, she continues to learn new ways to expand her organization.

"The experience not only empowered me as director but it also allowed me to lead volunteers to new heights. My work on the advisory committee has also helped me encourage other Harvest of the Heart Garden volunteers to create new opportunities for community interaction. As a result, we have formed an auxiliary board of special project committees and fundraising committees," she says. "The entire experience has just been phenomenal, not just for Harvest but for me as well."

# Arlene

*Arlene Parker Goldson, Community Coach*



*“The Neighborhood Fund lifts people up and places value on the human capital that we sometimes overlook when we are discussing the resources, assets and all the things that can help improve quality of life.”*

# Parker Goldson

A former accountant at Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation located in Brooklyn, NY, Arlene Parker Goldson's passion is rooted in seeing change happen first hand. As a result, she transitioned her position within Bedford-Stuyvesant to work at the organization's community center so she could see how budgets and finances translated into change at the local level. Thirty years later, Goldson continues to be involved in community transformation and has been a community coach with the Neighborhood Fund since 2005.

"I love being a coach. I come from a very large family and one of my early lessons growing up was from my father who always asked, 'What have you done to help someone today?' That is what the Neighborhood Fund and serving as a community coach helps me to do," Goldson says.

Goldson's introduction to the Neighborhood Fund came by way of program officer Tené Traylor whom she met while working at the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta several years prior. Traylor suggested Goldson attend a meeting with neighborhood groups that were looking to increase their capacity to improve the quality of community life.

"Tené is a master of matching people with process and that is what she did with me. She said 'you would be perfect as a technical advisor because of all the experience and technical expertise you have,'" Goldson says.

Goldson's first experience as a community coach was with Teens N Action, a project organized by community leader Robin Nash and a group of youth to create an after-school technology and computer access center in their southeast Atlanta neighborhood. Although her term as a coach is limited for each grant award, Goldson continues to keep in touch with many of the neighborhood leaders she's met over the years, sharing information and resources.

"Every group that I've had the privilege to work with, I have established a long-term relationship with the members," Goldson says. "I'm no longer their coach, but because of the relationship we've built I continue to coach and they also coach me."

A force in community building for the majority of her career, Goldson says she is grateful to have the opportunity to work with the Neighborhood Fund and its beneficiaries and is inspired by the people on the ground that truly make things happen.

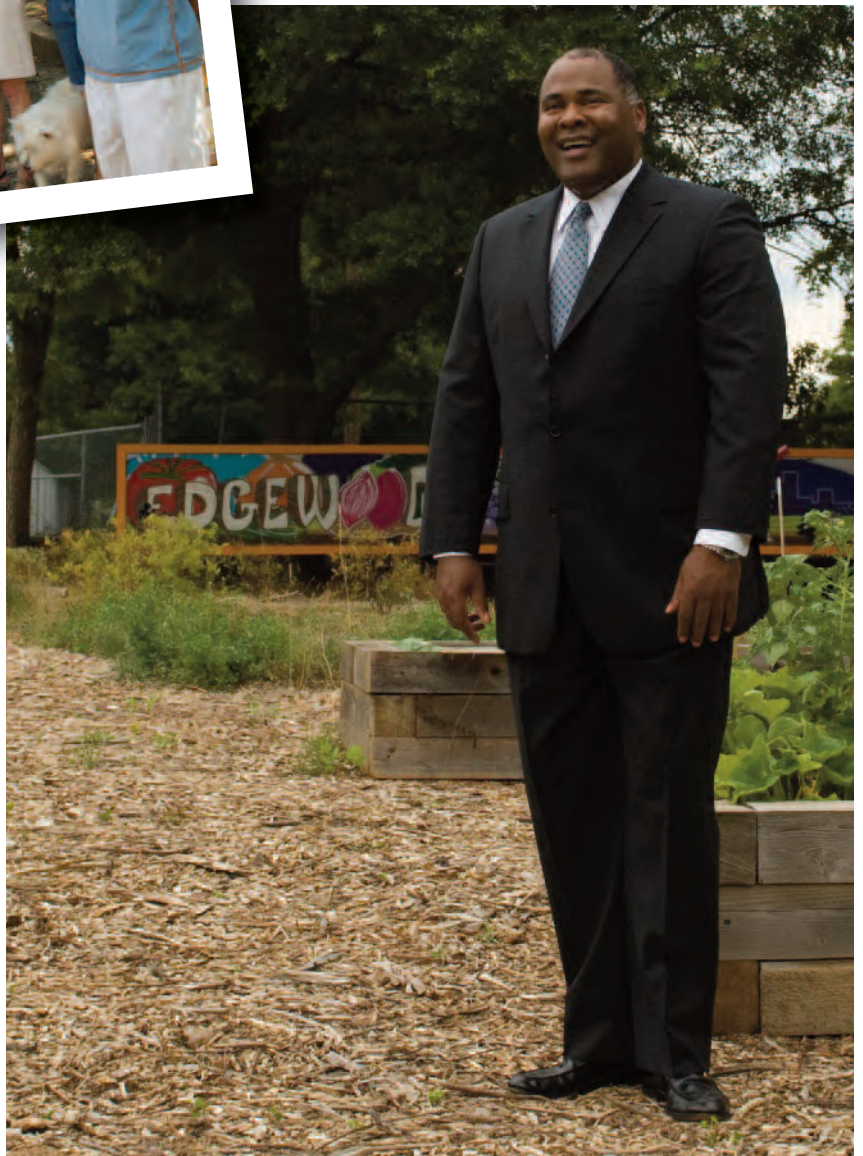
"The Neighborhood Fund lifts people up and places value on the human capital that we sometimes overlook when we are discussing the resources, assets and all the things that can help improve quality of life," she says.

Although Goldson's work experience gives her the acumen to impart critical technical expertise to grantees, she credits the community leaders with teaching her as well. In order to make a project successful, Goldson says her expertise has to be coupled with the passion supplied by community members.

"What I bring are resources, best practices and lessons learned, but all of that means very little if the human capital isn't there. The Neighborhood Fund brings those two together," she says. "It is driven by the energy, the commitment and the passion that only people bring to the conversation, and by the people I mean the neighborhood groups and the organizations at the local level."



*The Neighborhood Fund provides an opportunity for groups to get financial support to fill a gap in their community that otherwise might not be met.*



*Garry Long, Vice Chair, Neighborhood Fund Advisory Committee  
Director, Mayson Avenue Cooperative*



# Garry Long

As director of Mayson Avenue Cooperative, a community development organization created by The Zeist Foundation in 2003 to gauge the needs of the residents in the Edgewood neighborhood, Long is no stranger to community development. A resident of Edgewood, he is also president of Organized Neighbors of Edgewood and a past officer of the Neighborhood Planning Unit.

Mayson Avenue Cooperative is a community-based organization that brings residents and other community partners together to create a safe, family-oriented neighborhood, says Long. “Because of the work we do here in the Edgewood community, I can identify with some of the goals and desires these Neighborhood Fund applicants are hoping to achieve.”

As current vice chair of the Neighborhood Fund advisory committee, Long will be chair of the committee in 2012. In his past year of involvement, Long has enjoyed meeting the diverse neighborhood groups and seeing the projects taken on by communities throughout the region.

“I like learning about what is happening throughout metro Atlanta,” Long says. “I’ve been on site visits that included projects like residents improving the landscaping or green space in their communities to others developing community gardens or park.”

One of Long’s favorite site visits was to a neighborhood in north Atlanta that was working to build a playground. While the Neighborhood Fund typically funds groups in low to moderate income neighborhoods, the goals of the project, community building and participation, were very typical of Neighborhood Fund grantmaking.

“The Neighborhood Fund helped the group to build community engagement. It was great to see the sense of community that resulted – and that is the type of

work you see the Neighborhood Fund doing throughout the region. You want new relationships to be created and you want neighbors working together to make things happen in the community,” Long says. “It doesn’t have to be a community that is financially distressed. That is important everywhere.”

During his time on the advisory committee, Long has seen a shift in the requests from community groups, which has made the Neighborhood Fund take a closer look at its direction for the future. Although the needs will change over time, Long is confident the Neighborhood Fund will continue to adapt.

“The Neighborhood Fund has helped residents improve their communities for 20 years. For the next 20 years I think we will still have a relevant, necessary program where communities can come for financial support and training,” he says.

As long as the gap exists between the needs of communities and what local government can provide, there will be a place for the Neighborhood Fund and the community-based organizations that make community improvement happen, Long says.

“There are communities out there that simply need help doing the small things that for one reason or another just haven’t been addressed” Long says. “The Neighborhood Fund provides an opportunity for groups to get financial support to fill a gap in their community that otherwise might not be met.”



# Conclusion

Supporting residents and communities has always been a priority of The Community Foundation. For two decades, the Neighborhood Fund has been a resource for metro Atlanta residents seeking positive change in their neighborhoods. Through our work with the Neighborhood Fund, we have learned how to identify assets in the community, and listen and trust in the people who know their neighborhoods the best – the residents. Through coaching and support, these individuals and the groups they lead have changed their communities for the better.

Creating effective, long-term responses to critical issues in our region is a collaborative effort. In our work to strengthen more than 300 neighborhoods across metro Atlanta, we have relied on the support and investment of donors, advisory committee members, community coaches and partnering organizations. We value working with others and partner with the right people and institutions to improve our region.

If you are interested in supporting healthy neighborhoods and the people who live in them, become involved! Encourage your neighborhood group or association to apply for a Neighborhood Fund grant. Consider supporting or participating in a grassroots leadership program in your local area. Some of the programs are in Clayton, Gwinnett and DeKalb Counties, as well as through the GALEO Latino Community Development Fund.

Learn more about neighborhoods across the region by joining The Civic League for Regional Atlanta and participate in its annual Neighborhood Summit. And, if you have connections, resources and knowledge that can benefit neighborhoods, contact us and we can facilitate access to community groups and residents.

Lastly and most importantly, please consider contributing to the Neighborhood Fund program. This will ensure the Neighborhood Fund is able to continue its work to help residents strengthen communities throughout the Atlanta region.

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever does.”*

– Margaret Mead

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Residents of Brentwood Neighborhood Association in South Fulton County

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Neighborhood Leadership Institute class

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Residents stand at Fairway Green Park in DeKalb County

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Residents gather at Edgewood Community Garden



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